

**ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
INDIANA COMMISSION ON AUTISM**



**Indiana Legislative Services Agency
200 W. Washington Street, Suite 301
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204**

October, 1999

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A copy of this report is available on the Internet. Reports, minutes, and notices are organized by committee. This report and other documents for this Committee can be accessed from the General Assembly Homepage at <http://www.state.in.us/legislative/>.

I. STATUTORY DIRECTIVE

In 1992, the Indiana General Assembly enacted legislation directing the Commission to do the following under IC 12-11-7-5:

- (1) Study the service delivery system for individuals with autism and the families of individuals with autism, including the following:
 - (A) An analysis of the number of Indiana citizens believed to have autism.
 - (B) Funding amounts and sources.
 - (C) Types of expenditures and services provided.
 - (D) The number of clients served.
 - (E) Relationships among agencies and organizations.
 - (F) Residential options for individuals with autism.
- (2) Study the need and effectiveness of programs for individuals with autism.
- (3) Oversee and update the development of a comprehensive plan for services for individuals of all ages with autism. The comprehensive plan must include an interagency cooperation agreement among the following:
 - (A) The Department of Education.
 - (B) The Division of Mental Health.
 - (C) The Division of Family and Children.
 - (D) The Division of Disability, Aging, and Rehabilitative Services.
 - (E) Any other appropriate agencies.

The Legislative Council did not assign any specific topics to the Commission for the 1999 interim.

II. INTRODUCTION

The Commission met two times during the 1999 interim session on October 4, 1999, and October 18, 1999.

The Commission is not required to file a final report, but Senator Kent Adams, Chairman of the Commission, requested a report outlining the scope of discussions during the two meetings of the 1999 interim.

The Commission was updated on the Medicaid waiver waiting lists and progress made in filling all of the funded slots in the autism waiver. There was discussion regarding the "317" plan

including the blending of funding streams to enhance availability and ease of access to services, transferring of individuals with autism between waivers, and percentages of individuals with autism being targeted to fill the ICF/MR waiver slots that were funded under the "317" plan.

The Commission received information on the status of group homes for developmentally disabled individuals. Movement in the area of quality assurance in group homes was explained. It was emphasized that group homes are one of many methods of service needed for appropriate care of individuals with developmental disabilities.

Several parents testified regarding preschool intervention programs for children with autism. There was discussion of various methods of preschool intervention. Emphasis was placed on the necessity for availability of a variety of methods to serve different individuals with different manifestations of autism. Specific examples of programs in other states were provided with a focus on the need for state funding of such programs locally. There was also information presented regarding the need for specialized training for special education teachers who teach children with autism.

Individuals from the Indiana Resource Center for Autism, the Indiana Department of Education, and the Indiana Professional Standards Board presented information on efforts currently underway to address the needs of preschool children with autism. The Indiana Resource Center for Autism is working with the Indiana First Steps Program and with the Indiana Department of Education to formulate the best means of addressing the needs of preschool aged children with autism. The Indiana Department of Education, Division of Special Education, presented information regarding costs and availability of funding for individuals with autism and the services needed by those individuals at different points in the individuals' lives. **It was explained that it is easier to obtain funding of \$300,000 for one individual's out of state residential placement for treatment at a later age than to obtain funding to treat three individuals at a lower cost locally with their families to support them. The need for redirection of funding to localized, effective, and less expensive methods of education and treatment was emphasized.** The Indiana Professional Standards Board presented information on changing standards for teacher educational requirements and certifications.

The Commission emphasized the need for dissemination of information regarding educational funding formulas to all members of the Indiana General Assembly and other parties that could assist with resolution of this problem. The Commission also recognized the need for specific educational requirements for teachers working with individuals with autism, and for improvement in the ability of teachers to identify and serve the needs of children with

autism.

Agreement exists that it is of great importance to address autism as early as possible in an individual's life as there seems to be a "window of opportunity" in the preschool years. General consensus among those present at each meeting seemed to be that localized intervention during this window of opportunity decreases problems encountered by individuals with autism later in life, thereby decreasing long-term costs of needed services. It was also generally agreed that availability of appropriate intervention programs and state funding assistance to allow individuals with autism to remain with their families while receiving education and services that are appropriate to that individual is of great importance.

The Commission agreed that families of individuals with autism, Commission members, and other interested parties must pursue the dissemination of information throughout the General Assembly and to other parties who can assist with resolution of the education and services funding problems.